CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.784
12 February 1998

Original: ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FOURTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
on Thursday, 12 February 1998, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Norberg (Sweden)

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The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 784th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Belgium, Brazil, Algeria, Sri Lanka (who will speak on behalf of the Group of 21), the Netherlands, Finland, Poland, India and the United States. I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium, Mr. Peeters.

Mr. PEETERS (Belgium) (translated from French): Mr. President, at the 22 January 1998 plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, Belgium took the floor to explain both its position on and its concern about nuclear issues. At that time, if I may remind you, it explained its absolute scepticism about the multilateralization of nuclear disarmament at the present stage and about drawing up a timetable for the process. But we also said that it was right and desirable for the international community that an official and regular dialogue on the progress of nuclear cutbacks should begin in the Conference on Disarmament. An official dialogue within the Conference on Disarmament would enable the nuclear States to acknowledge the legitimate interest shown by other States in these issues, and to respond to it. A regular dialogue would allow everyone to follow the evolution of this fundamental issue, to assess the progress and the difficulties. There can be no doubt that such a dialogue would make it possible to establish between the nuclear States and those which are non-nuclear a climate of trust and a synergy of support that for the time being are lacking.

In our first statement we also mentioned the importance we attached to the South African proposal. We wish to express this interest today through a new proposal that shows how open-minded we are and gives practical expression to the ideas I have been explaining. This proposal, which I will ask you to distribute as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament reads as follows:

> "The Conference on Disarmament decides to establish an ad hoc group for reflection and study on ways and means of opening an exchange of information within the Conference on matters relating to article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty."

Belgium is aware that this is a modest proposal. We feel, however, that only realistic ambitions can enable the Conference on Disarmament to play the role it has thus far not been able to play on these matters. If, as happened last year, some of us persist in setting over-ambitious targets, then no progress can be expected. We will continue this dialogue of the deaf which made our work so unproductive in 1997. By wanting everything and wanting it straight away, we managed to achieve nothing. This is the pattern we have to change. And there is no other motive underlying the Belgian proposal.

I would like to close by stressing that the path we are seeking to open up can be taken by everybody. It can be taken without giving up basic positions which experience and analysis have shown us to be irreconcilable. However, we cannot disregard the importance that some States or groups of States attach to those positions. All of that being the case, let us start by

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taking a step that is modest but nonetheless significant, and leave to a later stage the task of reaching a final decision on this issue. We can do this without addressing questions of fundamental principle straight away, and in particular without giving up our principles.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Belgium for his statement, and the proposal he has submitted will be circulated as an official document as soon as possible. I now invite the representative of Brazil, Ambassador Saboia, to take the floor.

Mr. SABOIA (Brazil): The head of the Brazilian delegation, Ambassador Lafer, had originally intended to present this statement. Unfortunately, an insidious virus has prevented him from being with us today.

Mr. President, in the statement made by the head of the Brazilian delegation at the opening plenary meeting of this Conference on 20 January, he had the occasion to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency. As your term of office draws to a close, I would like to express sincere appreciation for the laborious efforts you have undertaken up to now and which got us off to a purposeful start in 1998. Thanks to your skilful guidance the Conference now finds itself in possession of an agenda and is actively engaged in consultations, both at the group level and with the entire membership, on how best to address the issues inscribed in it. Seen against the background of the frustration and impasse which marked last year's session, these are encouraging developments that should be pursued.

In order to help in this process, Brazil has made clear on many occasions its willingness to seek and support balanced and reasonable solutions so that all issues before the Conference can be properly dealt with. The focused discussions we have been holding under your presidency are proving to be useful as a consensus-building tool which may lead the Conference to agreeing to specific frameworks and mandates to deal with the issues before it. The ultimate success of such discussions depends, however, on them not becoming a dialogue of the deaf. Allowing substantive work to proceed requires heeding legitimate concerns from all sides.

Let me share Brazil's views on some of these issues. With regard to outer space, it is our expectation that consultations under a special coordinator would lead to the re-establishment of an ad hoc committee with an updated mandate, as the Conference was invited to undertake by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 52/37. The outer space Ad Hoc Committee met for the last time in 1994. Since then, there have been important technological advances, making it timely for the issue to be addressed again by the CD.

Concerning anti-personnel landmines, 1997 was a watershed year, with the successful conclusion of the Ottawa Convention. That instrument has so far received more than 120 signatures, including overwhelming support from Latin American countries. In addition to the Ottawa Convention, Brazil is a signatory of Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Both are now under consideration by the Brazilian Congress, and we

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hope they will enter into force and will enjoy universal participation as soon as possible. Despite the existence of these two legal instruments, one of which is of a comprehensive nature, Brazil is ready to consider positively a CD role on this subject as well, if such a course of action can effectively contribute to deepen the involvement of countries currently outside these instruments in international initiatives for the prohibition of anti-personnel landmines, demining and related humanitarian assistance. Given this particular situation, special care should be taken, in our view, in order to avoid possible duplication and dispersal of efforts.

We are sure that there can also be productive ways for the CD to address other issues under agenda items 6 and 7. Transparency in armaments allows for various possible approaches, that could at this juncture be usefully explored by a special coordinator. Some novel ideas concerning conventional weapons put forward by Canada and Mexico are worthy of serious consideration, such as, respectively, a code of conduct on arms transfers, and a global norm on illicit arms trafficking. Possible CD work in the field of conventional weapons should not detract us from pursuing the improvement of existing mechanisms, such as the United Nations Register and the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures.

Notwithstanding the importance of finding ways and means for the CD to deal with the above-mentioned issues, it is clear that for Brazil, as for the large majority of countries of the world and of those represented around this table, nuclear disarmament continues to be the paramount concern, one for which a substantive CD role must be found. As Ambassador Selebi of South Africa has put it, and Ambassador Anne Anderson of Ireland aptly highlighted, today this organ stands at a "crossroads of relevance". The single multilateral disarmament negotiating body should no longer be prevented from addressing the principal disarmament question of our time.

Brazil decided to lend its early and immediate support to the South African initiative on the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament (CD/1483) precisely because we saw in it an opportunity for the CD both to break the deadlock that has hampered its work since 1997 and to take its rightful place in contributing to the elimination of nuclear weapons. Careful and balanced drafting, drawing on previously floated ideas, has allowed a significant cross-group section of opinion to coalesce around this draft, which should be put to decision forthwith. Indeed, it is difficult to understand, and harder still to explain to informed opinion, why this body shouldn't be allowed to establish a mechanism for this purpose.

An ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament on the basis of what is being proposed would first need to identify issues for negotiation. It could serve as a forum where ongoing discussions on nuclear disarmament could be the subject of periodic information and clarifications by those directly engaged in them. As to consideration of proposals, there is no shortage of serious and informed studies on the question of nuclear weapons elimination, both from governmental and independent sources. Further, useful preparatory work on certain aspects of nuclear verification could be envisaged, as was the case

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with the Group of Seismic Experts exercise, which paved the way for a CTBT verification mechanism before there was consensus on a negotiating mandate for the CTBT Ad Hoc Committee.

Another related issue is the negotiation of a fissile materials treaty. Brazil supports that work on this topic be based on the Shannon report (CD/1299). As we have stated before, the various verification cost scenarios should be discussed from the outset of negotiations, and should not unduly burden those whose obligations already preclude them from producing these materials. Moreover, the question of the treatment of existing stocks is directly relevant for such a treaty to make a genuine contribution to nuclear disarmament - and not merely to codify a situation which to a large extent already exists, since most nuclear-weapon States have already ceased production of these materials. Disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually supportive, but still different concepts. This is why we should be careful in determining under which circumstances a fissile materials production ban can in fact positively impact nuclear disarmament.

Brazil of course commends and encourages the United States and the Russian Federation in their efforts to bring down their nuclear arsenals. We hope that START-II will be ratified as soon as possible, paving the way for still further cuts and for strategic nuclear warhead destruction under START-III, as jointly stated by Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin nearly a year ago in Helsinki. We have no quarrel with the view that the START process should, for now, continue to be conducted between the United States of America and the Russian Federation and hope that the other nuclear-weapon States will concurrently engage in substantive reductions.

While considering a CD role in nuclear disarmament, we have heard the argument that this could negatively interfere with the START process. Needless to say, we do not subscribe to this point of view. Any actual negotiation on nuclear disarmament in an ad hoc committee established for that purpose in the CD would of course have to be subject to the consent of all parties, which means both exercises would have to be compatible were they to run in parallel for some time. Moreover, what we really do not see is how a CD nuclear disarmament ad hoc committee established on the basis of CD/1483 can set back the START process. Quite the contrary, issues identified and which would merit consensual agreement for negotiation in the committee would certainly provide additional support for START. In a range of nuclear disarmament issues, the CD could complement and reinforce what for the time being is dealt with elsewhere. After all, isn't a similar approach being proposed here with regard to anti-personnel landmines?

The existence of a reduction process should not be argued against finding a role for the CD and for other forums on nuclear disarmament. We note, for instance, the emphasis placed on nuclear disarmament issues in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty's strengthened review process. This point was stressed by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso last year when submitting to the Brazilian Congress a request for authorization to accede to the NPT. At that time, he also indicated our intention to contribute to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation from within the Treaty's mechanisms.

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We often hear the assertion that today's needs in terms of disarmament efforts to be undertaken by this Conference are at variance from those set out in its "nuclear-biased" agenda. It is true that many countries' positions with regard to certain aspects of disarmament and non-proliferation issues have evolved, and the world today is indeed very different from what it was just a few years ago. The CD can play a role in conventional weapons and, as stated before, we are quite ready to engage in discussing proposals to that effect.

But some of the very changes in international affairs we have been witnessing in the past few years only add, in our view, to the timeliness and urgency of the CD taking up the task of formally addressing the problem of nuclear disarmament. A basic consideration here is precisely the fact that for some years now the world has no longer been divided between opposite ideological and military camps. Confrontation and tense coexistence have given way to consultation and cooperation. A world no longer subject to the tensions of East-West confrontation should encourage nuclear-weapon States to de-emphasize the role ascribed to nuclear weapons in their security strategies.

Yet nuclear weapons, albeit in lower overall numbers, remain entrenched in possessor States' security calculations. And so does deterrence doctrine, with its "mutually assured destruction" rationale essentially unchanged despite the fact that the two principal nuclear Powers are no longer antagonists. Why should such quintessential instruments and symbols of the cold war linger on when the cold war itself is clearly over?

Unfortunately, the end of the cold war has not, it seems, broken the spell cast by nuclear weapons over their possessors. Some governments, alliances and powerful lobbies are busy devising new roles for them. Significantly, nuclear deterrence has been taking some disconcerting twists and turns these days, making the role of nuclear weapons more ambiguous and diffuse. Expanding the range of hypothetical uses for nuclear weapons to cover perceived new threats raises disturbing questions. First, a nuclear retaliation to an attack with other weapons of mass destruction would hardly be an exemplary way of dealing with what would have been a violation of the most basic moral standards and all norms of civilized behaviour. It would also dangerously raise the ante in any such conflict, either by risking the involvement of other nuclear Powers or by providing a new stimulus for nuclear proliferation. This is not to speak of the most unspeakable consequences that such nuclear retaliation would carry, with devastating and indiscriminate effects extrapolating actual blast targets and possibly even the targeted country. Second, in case the perpetrator is a non-State actor, whom or what would a nuclear retaliatory strike be supposed to be directed against? These uncertainties and ambiguities, some of which are calculated and intentional, can nonetheless lead to calamitous consequences. Furthermore, traditional risks remain, such as a mistaken report of a non-existent incoming nuclear attack prompting a response that is for real and other possible accidents. The point here is that no amount of rationalization can make the mere existence of nuclear weapons less perilous.

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The current situation regarding nuclear weapons and the roles envisaged for them can only reinforce our long-standing conclusion that mankind's best guarantee against one day having to cope with nuclear disaster continues to be the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons. The threat posed by them affects all States; none is spared from the effects of their very existence, just as none would be from the horrors of actual use. The international community therefore has a genuine interest in, and a legitimate right to press for, a commitment on the part of all States in that regard. It is also justified in asking to have a say on modalities and phases for nuclear disarmament.

It is significant to note that a growing segment of non-governmental opinion is making itself increasingly heard on the issue of nuclear abolition, a trend which has as one of its recent landmarks the 1996 report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, presented to this Conference a year ago. Studies on abolition such as those prepared by the Stimson Center, on nuclear prohibition and no first use by the United States National Academy of Sciences, the model nuclear weapons convention, among many others, clearly show that various approaches leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons are seriously and thoroughly being pursued. This Conference would surely benefit were it allowed, as other forums dealing with global themes are, to hear these voices which sound directly from civil society in many countries. Participation in campaigns for abolition by both ex-military and international civilian leaders of high rank and political standing, such as those who signed a statement on nuclear weapons at the beginning of this month, show that political constituencies within States are increasingly aware of the political, economic, environmental and above all moral implications of continuing to rely on weapons which represent the negation of the highest values of human civilization.

In the ongoing struggle to rid the world of the nuclear threat, we take heed in this growing wave of concerned citizens' support for the cause of nuclear abolition, seeking deliverance from the cold war instruments of fear and terror. The CD cannot remain a huis clos, forever oblivious to this clamour. Emile Zola's courageous protestations, whose centennial is celebrated this year, should provide renewed source of inspiration and strength for all those who dare to take a stand drawing on moral principle. Then, as now, "La vérité est en marche et rien ne l'arrêtera".

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Brazil for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now invite the representative of Algeria, Ambassador Dembri, to take the floor.

Mr. DEMBRI (Algeria) (translated from French): Since my delegation is taking the floor for the first time in plenary, Mr. President, allow me to extend my warmest congratulations to you on taking up the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament and to express to you our great appreciation of your positive contribution to progress in our work thanks to your personal qualities and your profound knowledge of this body. I would also like to assure you of my delegation's full support, and to take this opportunity to welcome our new colleagues in the Conference on Disarmament - the

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Ambassadors of China, India, Iran, Japan, the Netherlands, Peru, Sri Lanka, the United States of America and Poland. I would also like to express the gratitude we all owe to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, and all the members of the secretariat for their assistance and readiness to help.

I would like to start by recalling that the Conference on Disarmament is a body set up by the international community with a deliberately limited make-up allowing it better to respond to the negotiating mission assigned to it. This incontestably pinpoints the individual responsibility and collective responsibility of all member States, which are accountable to the community of nations for action taken in the field of disarmament. This is also a body which, since it is the sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, helps to shape and finalize multilateral treaties since disarmament is closely linked to collective security and should not legitimately be conducted outside this multilateral framework. Finally, the Conference on Disarmament is the framework within which national or other interests must necessarily conduct a dialogue, even if they diverge, in order to be able to fit into a collective symbiosis, which alone can bring us closer to the path to a world rid of arms. These interests should not curb action, but on the contrary should serve as a catalyst for action in order to link up with those of the international community. In any event, the former cannot replace the latter, still less thwart them.

I wished to remind the Conference of these principles which are familiar and recognized - but I am sorry to be blunt - very often forgotten by us within our Conference which is thus penalized by the perverse effects generated as specific interests are inexplicably blown up out of all proportion. These interests may be felt to be natural, but ultimately the way in which they are currently expressed distorts the multilateral action which it is our task to pursue here. How, then, can we fail to be alarmed at the fact that issues which are within the competence of the Conference on Disarmament are increasingly being addressed outside this forum? That is why the Conference has no moral authority to present the international community with a negative report on its work, because it is supposed to give impetus to multilateral negotiating diplomacy based on convergence and consensus far removed from the spirit of confrontation. These negotiations nurtured by the machinery in use in our Conference cannot be properly undertaken if, here or there, security interests and specific convictions are elevated to the rank of dogma.

For its part the delegation of Algeria, although it feels that some items on our agenda have priority over others, wishes to consider with an open mind the structured examination of all the items on our agenda. In other words, it feels that these subjects are all eligible for negotiation here. Because of the time allotted to us and the human resources available, it is possible that we will be led to place one item ahead of another. But this choice must be made on the basis of how urgent issues are and not on the basis of an imposed political rank-setting which gives one item value and denies other items any merit. Recognition of the political and security merits of negotiating on all the items on our agenda is an essential condition of

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present and future progress in our work and intrinsic confirmation that the Conference on Disarmament indeed enjoys the status of sole negotiating forum if we are to avoid the risk of its being sidelined because of lack of action and then stripped of the role which was thus conferred upon it by the first United Nations General Assembly special session on disarmament in 1978.

The above considerations make it possible to understand better why nuclear disarmament is at the centre of our concerns, not that this issue is the exclusive task of the Conference on Disarmament but because it is the most profound expectation of the international community and because in each human being it focuses the dread of mass destruction and extermination. Consequently we must rid ourselves of inhibitions or mental blocks which prevent us from tackling this subject here.

The accumulation of delivery vehicles for nuclear weapons that has already been recorded, their quantities and their excessive sophistication are a challenge to the international community as a whole and shift nuclear disarmament away from the exclusive competence of the nuclear States, converting it into an international security issue which the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating body in the field of disarmament, can and naturally must tackle. This multilateralization is essential and it can be effectively undertaken with an eye to the security interests of all involved and without detriment to the bilateral process of nuclear disarmament on which the two largest possessors of nuclear arsenals have embarked. In this regard, we cannot ignore here the voice of international public opinion and civil society, which, in all forums, media and public debates, continue to remind us:

That nuclear weapons constitute a threat to the human race and to international security;

That there is increasingly little justification for their possession in the light of the new world order, the prime feature of which has been the disappearance of antagonism between blocs and thus the logical end of the function of deterrence;

That nuclear disarmament must be given absolute priority if we are to prevent a mismatch between the military doctrines of the nuclear States and the concerns of human societies;

That the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly on disarmament back in 1978 made nuclear disarmament a priority. Today more than ever before it is a priority that is within reach if the political will exists;

That the International Court of Justice, in its advisory opinion of 8 July 1996 on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, declared that all States, and not just the nuclear States, have an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control;

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That the relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly, including the most recent one, resolution 52/38 L, must be taken into consideration and apprehended in the light of their prime merit, which is that of giving specific shape to the aspirations of the international community for the setting up, in 1998, of an ad hoc committee within the Conference on Disarmament which will deal with nuclear disarmament;

That nuclear disarmament cannot be seen as falling within the sole competence of the nuclear States, which would either set the scale of responsibilities on its head or remove all responsibility from the community of non-nuclear States, thus very quickly disqualifying the Conference on Disarmament.

All these appeals map out the Conference on Disarmament's sphere of competence. Multilateralization is a political, legal and security imperative and provides the justification for our presence here. How must it be put into effect, and by what modus operandi? Yet again, there are a few principles which could help to build consensus within our forum. First of all, the most appropriate organizational arrangement is the creation of a negotiating mechanism, i.e. an ad hoc committee, which should negotiate and not just cogitate. Cogitation is, we agree, an exercise inherent in negotiation, but negotiation must be its logical culmination. Secondly, non-proliferation and disarmament - as my distinguished colleague Gilberto Saboia said before me - are two inseparable dimensions which strengthen or weaken each other, but there comes a time when non-proliferation needs to be reinvigorated by disarmament, otherwise it will run up against its limits. That time has now come. Thirdly, the establishment of an ad hoc committee within the Conference on Disarmament cannot be taken as interference, a hindrance or an attempt to strip the United States of America and Russia of their obligation, which is a reality today, as we recognize, to continue cutting back their nuclear arsenals. The ongoing bilateral process, which we welcome, should be able to benefit from multilateral input from the Conference on Disarmament. The two processes are not mutually exclusive: on the contrary, they complement one another through the action taken simultaneously between the two great Powers mentioned earlier and within the Conference on Disarmament. How could this body, whose function it is to give specific shape to the multilateral disarmament effort, harm or be detrimental to another disarmament effort?

There is no lack of proposals within the Conference on Disarmament for specific negotiating work or to prepare the framework suitable for such negotiations: we have the proposed programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons submitted by 28 delegations in the G.21, including Algeria, the work of the Canberra Commission, the proposed terms of reference for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament submitted by 26 delegations from the G.21, including Algeria, a proposal from Egypt and more recently a proposal from South Africa, and this very morning a proposal from Belgium. A solution drawing on all these proposals can be reached, and a decision is awaited from the Conference on Disarmament. The spectrum of proposals is already fairly wide: what we now need is to affirm our political will to tackle nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament, a political will not to keep it

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out of the multilateral arena by invoking dogmatically perceived security interests running counter to the collective interests of the international community.

Last year at this time, we quoted a work by two major scientists, Georges Charpak, the French winner of the Nobel Prize for Physics, and the American scientist, Richard Garwin, entitled Feux follets et champignons nucléaires, in which they gave an authoritative explanation of how we can reduce nuclear stockpiles at lower cost and how we can maintain levels of deterrence compatible with the security needs of the nuclear-weapon States. In so doing, these two great scientists were responding to the desire of international public opinion to rid our planet of the nuclear risk for ever. And this year, as if in answer to them, a major European weekly published a special report last week revealing that the nuclear tests in the sixties were never as clean as they were made out to be, quite the contrary - the fact that civilians and soldiers had unwittingly been exposed to high radiation levels was concealed. Consequently, in the interests of transparency, this weekly publication is calling for the opening up of hitherto closed military archives. This is why, by taking up the question of nuclear disarmament, our Conference could also contribute to this major effort to achieve transparency by increasing its scope and content.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Algeria for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now invite the representative of Sri Lanka, Ambassador Palihakkara, to take the floor.

Mr. PALIHAKKARA (Sri Lanka): Mr. President, as I take the floor for the first time in plenary today, let me state at the outset how pleased we are to see you, a long-time CD stalwart and a friend, presiding over our proceedings. As you complete your term, Sweden's inaugural presidency under your competent leadership has already given us a solid institutional foundation, paving the way, we hope, for substantive progress in due course. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to all those colleagues who have expressed words of welcome to me.

I am taking the floor today in my capacity as the Coordinator of the Group of 21 to make a very brief statement on behalf of my Group concerning the priority question on our agenda, namely agenda item 1.

The Group of 21 continues to attach the highest priority to the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament under agenda item 1. The Group is awaiting a reaction from other members of the Conference to the proposals that have been made in this regard.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Sri Lanka for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now invite the representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Majoor, to take the floor.

Mr. MAJOOR (Netherlands): Mr. President, allow me first to express the gratitude of my delegation for the skilful way you have presided over the CD at this juncture, referred to by some delegations as the crossroads of

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relevance. You and your able team deserve our admiration for the persistence and patience with which you are seeking consensus among all member States on how to move the CD forward, both on its programme of work and on substance. I can assure you that my delegation will support you and your successors and will actively contribute in the search for the highest common denominator. I would also like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Petrovsky, the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, and his staff for their valuable support to the Conference.

Although relatively new myself, I would like to use this opportunity to welcome my new colleagues. Their fresh look on multilateral disarmament negotiations and the role of the Conference therein - in combination with the wisdom of my more experienced colleagues - will provide, I am sure, the right mix for early agreement on a substantive programme of work.

Today I would like to make a few observations on the past, the present and the future of the Conference on Disarmament, thereby focusing on substance rather than on procedure.

Looking back at its record over the last 30 years, the Conference has developed an impressive set of international legal instruments that addresses in a comprehensive manner the security challenges posed by weapons of mass destruction. I mention here the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1968, extended indefinitely in 1995, the Biological Weapons Convention of 1972, the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1993 and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty of 1996. These treaties now live their own life through the mechanisms which they have created in one form or the other. Although these treaties deal with all existing kinds of weapons of mass destruction and are in that sense comprehensive, we know all too well that our work is far from completed. The CD and its member States have to do better.

First of all, these conventions have to be signed and ratified by all. The same goes for the bilateral agreements in this area. Non-ratification of any of these instruments by any State has wider implications than only its effect on the feasibility of one particular treaty. It undermines the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of the agreed disarmament measures and the credibility of disarmament negotiations, in this Conference and in any other multilateral or bilateral framework.

Secondly, we have to improve and expand those instruments where appropriate. The negotiations on a verification protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention are a case in point. We have to redouble our efforts to move these negotiations forward. Under the able chairmanship of Ambassador Tóth, the Netherlands is committed to reaching early agreement on an effective and credible legally binding instrument, with a set of compliance measures ranging from declarations to non-challenge visits and challenge inspections.

Thirdly, we have to add new instruments, where lacunae still exist or where the ultimate objective of ridding the world of weapons of mass destruction is not yet achieved. In the nuclear field, for example, much

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still remains to be done, notably - as an agreed further step to nuclear disarmament - the negotiation of a treaty on fissile material cut-off. I will come back to this issue later.

I would like to share with you now some of my first impressions as a newcomer to the Conference. I am very impressed by the outstanding quality of my colleagues and their staff, their knowledge of disarmament matters, their political skills and their creativity. At the same time, I am struck that this collective know-how and expertise is not put to its proper use. There is a certain hesitation to enter into real and substantive discussions and negotiations out of fear, it seems, of disrupting the good atmosphere. My delegation is equally interested in a good atmosphere but that should not prevent us from addressing the substance. The latter should not be overtaken by procedure and by tactics, a word I have heard in the framework of the CD more than in any other multilateral organization. My delegation, I am afraid, is bad in tactics and therefore has none. We simply want to start work, substantive work if possible.

As a warm-up we could, and still can, support your proposal, Mr. President, to reappoint three reform coordinators on the agenda, the expansion and the effective functioning of the Conference. We can also accept the establishment of ad hoc committees, or special coordinators if deemed necessary as a first step, for outer space, negative security assurances and transparency in armaments. We do not make any linkages between the three subjects or with any other subject, but it will not come as a surprise that my Government regards, out of those three, first and foremost transparency in armaments as a priority. My delegation can also agree to the reappointment of a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines (APLs). After the signing of the Ottawa treaty, the situation with respect to anti-personnel landmines has changed. There now exists a treaty prohibiting the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of APLs. A special coordinator should consult on how the Conference can effectively contribute to the universalization of the ban on anti-personnel landmines. It must be clear, however, that action in the Conference may not be in contradiction with, or undermine, the letter and spirit of the Ottawa treaty. That is to say that if the CD should negotiate a ban on transfers, as many have suggested, we do not oppose that as long as we are talking about a complete ban on transfers as embodied in the Ottawa treaty.

Let me now return in more detail to two subjects on which I touched earlier: nuclear disarmament and transparency in armaments, two issues to which my Government attaches great importance and on which it would like the Conference to make progress. Nuclear disarmament, because the new international security situation provides a unique opportunity for new and bold steps. The end of confrontation, its replacement by intensive and substantive cooperation, both bilaterally and multilaterally, as well as regionally and globally, should not only allow for such steps, but should in fact stimulate that. Transparency in armaments, because we are confronted on a daily basis with the tremendous suffering caused by conventional conflicts aggravated by the uncontrolled build-up of conventional weapons.

(Mr. Majoor, Netherlands)

As I stated earlier, it is my Government's view that we should start without delay negotiations on the prohibition of the production of fissile material on the basis of the agreed Shannon mandate. We recognize that a number of delegations have difficulties with some aspects of the mandate. This should, however, not stand in the way of the commencement of substantive work in an ad hoc committee. The discussions and negotiations will give ample opportunity for delegations to express themselves and to address their security concerns. It is impossible to predict, let alone prescribe, how the negotiations shall take place before they have even started. What we should have is the necessary level of trust, of confidence that all those concerns will be duly taken into consideration.

At the same time, we have to recognize that a cut-off treaty is not an end in itself. Other steps on the way to nuclear disarmament have to be taken in parallel, both in a bilateral and multilateral context and at the global international level. It is our hope that early ratification of the START II Treaty will pave the way for further reductions in a far-reaching START III. Also, the vast amount of tactical nuclear weapons should be addressed in order to improve transparency with respect to their precise numbers, and to reduce those substantially with the ultimate aim of eliminating them. Much work is being done in bilateral negotiations between the nuclear-weapon States, and we appreciate the progress that has been achieved in the last 10 to 15 years. The question now before the Conference is how it can contribute realistically to nuclear disarmament. As my Belgian colleague and many others after him have clearly stated, and I agree with them, the Conference is not in a position to negotiate nuclear arms reductions: this is first and foremost the responsibility of the nuclear-weapon States. The Conference would also be overplaying its hand if it believed it was able to press the United States, Russia and the other nuclear States into a time-bound framework. What we can do in the CD is to stimulate the nuclear disarmament process wherever we can. Cut-off is a case in point. Also, other subjects on our agenda have links to nuclear disarmament, such as negative security assurances, outer space and transparency. My delegation could also support, in an innovative approach, a framework that would allow member States of the CD to discuss regularly progress on nuclear disarmament and to exchange information, particularly on negotiations between nuclear-weapon States. We believe such a framework would serve us all: it would provide an opportunity for delegations to express their concerns, and it would contribute to transparency and confidence, two indispensable ingredients for any successful disarmament negotiation. We welcome, in this context, the spirit of the South African initiative, and also the Belgian proposals which have a clear potential to move the Conference forward on the issue of nuclear disarmament.

This brings me to my last point. My delegation is, rightfully, identified with the subject of transparency in armaments (TIA). We are proud of that, because we strongly believe that transparency remains one of the most important keys to peace and security at the lowest possible level of armament. Without transparency, no confidence; without confidence, no security. Transparency permeates and should permeate all arms control and disarmament negotiations. Transparency arrangements are a central part of the NPT, of the Chemical Weapons Convention, of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, and of the

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negotiations on a verification protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention. Transparency is also the main objective of the United Nations Conventional Arms Register, to which so many of us provide on an annual basis data on the export and procurement of certain types of armaments.

These examples show that transparency is both a vertical and a horizontal issue. It should be, and is, addressed under the various arms control and disarmament treaties and arrangements. But at the same time, the issue should be addressed in a more comprehensive manner. The CD, with its specific expertise and experience in arms control and disarmament, is the pre-eminent body to stimulate further thinking on how to bring about, in a gradual but effective manner, the necessary level of transparency in armaments.

With respect to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, the CD should be able to elaborate and pre-negotiate workable options for its expansion with other types of conventional weapons and with data on holdings and procurement through national production. Even with a helpful report of a Group of Governmental Experts, the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly does not lend itself to a detailed discussion, let alone a negotiation, on the specifics of such an expansion.

Apart from that, the CD remains the proper place to discuss and, where possible, elaborate other initiatives relating to conventional arms control, including confidence-building measures and arms export control mechanisms. The worldwide problem of the proliferation of small arms and arms of light calibre, particularly in areas of conflict, has increased the urgency for the CD to address these issues. In this context my delegation welcomes the proposals made by Canada in the plenary on 22 January 1998, and in particular the proposals aimed at promoting responsibility and restraint in international arms transfers; developing guidelines or a code of conduct on arms transfers, including small arms; and curbing illicit arms transfers.

Work on TIA should be resumed as soon as possible in an ad hoc committee with a broad mandate, allowing all delegations to voice their ideas and concerns on the issues. As a first step, the appointment of a special coordinator should be considered, as proposed by the G-21 for the 1997 programme of work, and reiterated recently by Ambassador Zahran of Egypt. For this purpose, my delegation has circulated a draft decision to appoint a special coordinator on TIA, and I hope that the Conference will take an early and positive decision on this proposal.

In closing, my delegation hopes that during this session we will address, in a substantive way, the various subjects that have been proposed by delegations for further work in the Conference, in ad hoc committees where possible, through special coordinators where necessary or, if required, by using any other agreeable framework or mechanism. Some of these subjects are priorities for my delegation, but I recognize and respect that other delegations have other priorities. We should, therefore, arrive sooner rather than later at an agreed menu of work reflecting the priorities of all.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now invite the representative of Finland, Ambassador Reimaa, to take the floor.

Mr. REIMAA (Finland): I take the floor today to present officially, on behalf of 23 countries, the proposal for a draft decision on the reappointment of the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines. I introduced this proposal unofficially in an informal meeting last Thursday.

With reference to United Nations General Assembly resolution 52/38 H, and on the basis of last year's decision, the following countries propose the reappointment of the Special Coordinator to continue his consultations on a possible mandate on the question of anti-personnel landmines under agenda item 6: Argentina, Australia, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Chile, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Venezuela. This draft decision has been circulated as a Conference document (CD/1495).

I would like also to use this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, for your tireless efforts to guide the Conference towards decisions on concrete work. We appreciate the opportunity during the last few weeks of exchanging views on various agenda items in the informal consultations. These consultations have been conducted in a serious and constructive manner. We are convinced that we have made progress in substance.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Finland for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now invite the representative of Poland, Ambassador Jakubowski, to take the floor.

Mr. JAKUBOWSKI (Poland): Mr. President, even though your term of office is running out, allow me first to congratulate you formally on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and on your commendable discharge of the responsibilities which that office entails. We are mindful of the contribution which Sweden, represented by illustrious Ministers for Disarmament, has made over the years to the multilateral disarmament negotiations in Geneva. Your efforts to launch the current session of the CD on a productive course are fully in line with that fine tradition.

We are confident that your efforts in regard to the CD agenda and work programme, which you have pursued with perseverance and skill, will soon pay off as we proceed to a substantive schedule of our work this year.

My greetings go also to the distinguished Secretary-General of the Conference, His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, and his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail.

I should also like to take this opportunity to welcome the distinguished representatives of China, India, Japan, the Netherlands, Peru, Sri Lanka, the

(Mr. Jakubowski, Poland)

United States and Viet Nam who have joined the Conference at this session. I look forward to close cooperation with them all. At the same time I am grateful for the words of welcome addressed to me.

I have asked for the floor in connection with the broad-ranging exchange of views on anti-personnel landmines (APLs), which we had last Thursday within the context of informal open-ended consultations on item 6 of our agenda.

Bearing in mind the important support which has emerged for the appointment of a special coordinator on APLs, on the one hand, and the misgivings and doubts voiced by some delegations, on the other, I should like to offer some comments on behalf of Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Chile, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, Venezuela and, of course, Poland.

We assume that the overall, general task of the coordinator would be to try to explore and establish the views of Conference members on what the Conference on Disarmament may usefully do to promote the broader objective of a more effective prohibition of APLs. In the view of the delegations in whose name I am speaking, the pursuit of a global APL export ban in the CD would represent an important step in that direction. In our considered opinion, the reason is simple: such a ban would have the support and participation of the main producers of APLs. Such a ban would move the world one step further toward a lasting solution of the global landmine crisis.

As we certainly appreciate, a large portion of the APLs underlying the current humanitarian crisis were not manufactured in the countries in which they were placed. If we stop the flow of APLs between countries, we will significantly reduce the availability of APLs that cause the humanitarian problem. We are persuaded that CD negotiations centring on this aspect of the APL problem would close the gap in coverage between the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), which only establishes controls on APL transfers, and the Ottawa Convention, which does not capture many of the key States in effectively reducing the flow of APLs between countries.

We therefore have no doubt that the CD needs to address APLs quickly. The simple reason is that casualties mount on a daily basis. As will be recalled, this was the key motivation behind efforts to begin negotiations in the CD last year as well as behind the Ottawa Convention. Then there is indisputable fact that the CD, unlike the CCW mechanism, can act now. There are no principled objections to the CCW route, but we are concerned about time lines. As the distinguished representative of France, Ambassador Bourgois, pointed out last Thursday, the more time which elapses before this issue is addressed, the more victims of APLs there will be.

To begin negotiations within the framework of the CCW Convention, a majority of the High Contracting Parties have to agree to a Conference to amend either the Convention itself or Protocol II before such a Conference can

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be convened. Given that the amended Protocol II has yet to enter into force, it is unlikely that a majority of States parties will, in the near future, agree to amend the Protocol.

Contrary to some views, a treaty negotiated in the CD does not have to take a significant amount of time. Although each treaty is unique in its own way, there is, in this case, a precedent on which negotiations could draw. However, we would not want to prejudge in any way the exact appearance of a final treaty before we have begun negotiations.

These, nevertheless, are all issues that, in our considered opinion, can be addressed by a special coordinator, and we urge this reappointment as soon as possible.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Poland for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the next speaker, the representative of India, Ambassador Kunadi. You have the floor, Madam.

Mrs. KUNADI (India): Mr. President, may I begin by congratulating you formally on your assuming the presidency of the CD at the beginning of the annual session this year? I would also like to thank you and other colleagues for the warm words of welcome addressed to me. I would like to assure you and all fellow delegations as well as the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Petrovsky, the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Bensmail, and the secretariat, of the earnest wish of my delegation to work together in our common endeavours. We note with appreciation the industry and fairness that you have brought to the job in trying to find solutions to the issues in order to lay the ground for us to move forward. You can be assured of the full cooperation of my delegation in your efforts to identify areas of consensus and to build upon them.

As I take the floor for the first time, I am conscious of the immense responsibility that rests on our shoulders as members of this Conference in realizing the expectations of the international community and in achieving the goals and objectives as set forth in the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly. India remains committed to achieving genuine nuclear disarmament in a comprehensive and non-discriminatory manner. We believe that a nuclear-weapon-free world will enhance our national security as it will for others, as well as global security. We find the doubts regarding the CD's role on negotiations relating to nuclear disarmament difficult to understand. We believe this issue remains settled by the Final Document of SSOD-I, which regards the CD as the sole multilateral negotiating forum of the international community for disarmament issues.

The elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction has been the long-standing objective of the international community. India has been in the forefront of international efforts for the elimination of these weapons of mass destruction. India signed and ratified the BTWC in 1974 and has actively contributed to the ongoing efforts in the BTWC Ad Hoc Group

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to strengthen the implementation of the Convention. India was one of the original States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, which provides for the complete elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction through a multilaterally negotiated non-discriminatory agreement embodying equal rights and obligations for all States parties. While we have made considerable headway towards disarmament in the field of chemical and biological weapons, the same cannot be said in the case of nuclear weapons.

The end of the cold war raised hopes and expectations that the nuclear-weapons States would take credible and meaningful steps for reducing and eliminating the threat posed by nuclear weapons to international peace and security. It is a matter of regret that despite some reductions, the hair-trigger nuclear confrontation inherited from the cold war period persists to this day. The refinement and upgrading of nuclear weapons is continuing. New types of nuclear weapons are being designed using non-explosive techniques. The search for new doctrines to justify their continued possession and use belies the expectation that the end of the cold war would also mean an end to the threat posed by nuclear weapons to international peace and security.

We believe that, as the sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, the CD is the most appropriate forum for discussions and negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention which would ban the development, production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons and ensure their destruction in a comprehensive manner. United Nations General Assembly resolution 52/38 O embodies the desire of a large majority of the international community for the early conclusion of a nuclear weapons convention. Chemical weapons and biological weapons have been dealt with through two comprehensive conventions which govern all aspects of these weapons. It will be only logical that a similar third convention should be negotiated for nuclear weapons. It is a matter of concern that the very success in the field of elimination of chemical and biological weapons should become the justification for the continued retention and possible use of nuclear weapons against the perceived threat of other weapons of mass destruction.

We have, along with other non-aligned and other developing countries, submitted a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons (CD/1419). There have been other proposals urging the early commencement of negotiations for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The historic advisory opinion given by the International Court of Justice unanimously called for the urgent commencement and conclusion of such negotiations. Many distinguished voices in the nuclear-weapon States have highlighted the diminishing utility of nuclear weapons and the need to do away with them in order to prevent accidents, proliferation and the possibility of these weapons falling into the hands of non-State entities. Last year, we joined other delegations from non-aligned and other developing countries to present to the Conference a mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament contained in document CD/1463. United Nations General Assembly resolution 52/38 L calls upon the CD to establish, on a priority basis, an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to commence negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons within a

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time-bound framework through a nuclear weapons convention. This call should not be ignored and the CD must take substantive steps to respond to it.

India attaches the highest priority to nuclear disarmament. Our proposal for a time-bound phased programme is not an "all or nothing" or a "fixed timetable" approach, as characterized by some. Pending the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, we have proposed the immediate conclusion of an international agreement prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons as a step in our efforts directed towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. United Nations General Assembly resolution 52/39 C calls for such negotiations in the CD.

We oppose non-action on genuine nuclear disarmament in the CD, and have our doubts about the utility of repetitive exercises. We would like the ride to our common destination of a nuclear-weapon-free world to be smooth, with road maps, signposts and time-frames, on which all of us can agree. We are looking at the South African proposal contained in CD/1483 to see whether we can work on it with a view to moving our work forward on agenda item 1 by providing a common meeting ground without prejudging the differing approaches.

We had expressed reservations on the tenuous nature of the compromise on fissile material cut-off (FMCT) when we participated in the consensus reflected in the Shannon report, which was reached in 1995, just before the NPT Extension and Review Conference. Subsequent developments and recent statements by a number of delegations indicate that these reservations are widely shared. United Nations General Assembly resolution 52/38 L recognizes FMCT as an integral step leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework. Last year, proposals that were put forward and considered in tne CD did not command consensus. A proposal has been tabled this year in working paper CD/1485 which suggests the value of reconsidering the context in which the mandate contained in the Shannon report was put forward. There is a greater acknowledgement that it is necessary to develop a new consensus. We remain ready to participate in consultations on the subject, taking into account all proposals that have been put forward.

We are also ready to commence work on other issues. India remains committed to the objective of a non-discriminatory and universal ban on anti-personnel landmines. We believe that the objective can be achieved in a meaningful way through a phased approach that would enjoy international consensus, and by addressing humanitarian concerns and legitimate defence requirements of States. We could start with a ban on transfers. This is motivated by the knowledge that the landmines which are causing devastation to civilian populations around the world today are not produced in the areas where the devastation is taking place, but have been transferred there. The present export moratoria would then be made universal. We could follow other steps and gradually narrow the field, as it were, to a situation in which landmines are used only for the defence of borders, a situation which could finally be dealt with as appropriate military solutions are found. The basis of this phased approach would be seen as confidence-building, enabling States to deal urgently with the humanitarian crisis, while remaining sensitive to

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their legitimate security needs. The international community should also effectively address the criticial issue of mine clearance and dedicate greater efforts and assistance to affected areas.

Deliberations in the CD have revealed that we are close to reaching consensus in some areas, PAROS and NSAs in particular. Space offers immense opportunities which could be utilized for the socio-economic development of mankind. There are a number of areas which need to be addressed urgently: a ban on ASAT weapons, rules-of-the-road arrangements, among other issues. We believe that it is essential to strive towards an international regime which ensures that space is used only for peaceful purposes. In previous years, the Ad Hoc Committee had developed a relevant and useful data bank. We are encouraged to note that resolution 52/37 on this subject in the last session of the United Nations General Assembly was not opposed by any delegation. We would like to see early establishment of an ad hoc committee with a negotiating mandate on this issue. We welcome the proposal made by Canada contained in CD/1487 on a possible mandate for an ad hoc committee, and see it as a step in the direction of peaceful use of outer space. Should our deliberations this year indicate consensus to commence work on NSA, we are ready to do so.

In other areas where consensus remains elusive, we may intensify consultations with a view to reaching consensus. However, I wish to reiterate once more our position on agenda item 1: nuclear disarmament remains our primary objective and our priority. For the very existence of nuclear weapons threatens international security, and their continued possession in the hands of a few countries creates an inherently discriminatory, unjust and unstable situation. We do hope that this Conference will be able to respond to the expectations that the international community has of it.

My delegation will extend to you, Mr. President, its fullest cooperation in your efforts to enlarge the areas of consensus so that we can move forward towards our common goals.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of India for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now invite the representative of the United States, Mr. Grey, to take the floor.

Mr. GREY (United States of America): I have asked for the floor today to address the current situation in the CD. In this regard, it is more in sorrow than in anger that I state the obvious. Our shared hope that the 1998 session of the Conference on Disarmament would avoid the errors of 1997 is dwindling rapidly away in spite of your efforts. Many of us came to this CD session anxious to end the paralysis of 1997 and ready to offer some flexibility. And in fact, the United States has demonstrated its flexibility by accepting CD work, in the spirit of compromise, on issues that are not priority items for us. We are prepared to continue to be flexible, but it is only fair to ask that our flexibility be reciprocated.

Multilateral diplomacy, like politics, is the art of the possible. There are a number of topics on the 1998 CD agenda whose possibilities could

(Mr. Grey, United States)

become realities in this unique multilateral forum. To this end, the United States joined the consensus in approving the CD's 1998 agenda, and we are prepared to discuss any item on that agenda, including item 1, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". Negotiations to ban the export of anti-personnel landmines, negotiations to ban the production of fissile material, further progress on conventional weapons and on transparency in armaments, and re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances are other CD topics that are not merely possible but indeed in our view ripe for immediate multilateral work. Agreement to work on these topics would reinvigorate the CD, end the deadlock, and demonstrate to the world community that the best days of multilateral diplomacy are yet to come.

Our fellow CD members who call for an ad hoc committee to negotiate nuclear disarmament should remember that we almost began negotiations on a key element of the "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament", consistent with the need to continue to move with determination towards the full realization and effective implementation of the provisions of the non-proliferation treaty. That was in 1995, when the Ad Hoc Committee on a "ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices" was established in the CD, only to be blocked from ever meeting or even having its chairman appointed. Had those negotiations begun in 1995, they might now be nearing completion and we could be looking to the future. Those who call most loudly for nuclear disarmament cannot simultaneously refuse to take steps on FMCT. By doing so, they call into question their motives and their objectives on both issues. I cannot believe that this is their intent. It certainly is not ours.

We have been called "laconic" in the expression of our view that the CD is not the appropriate forum for negotiations to reduce the stockpile of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. But laconic seems an inappropriate word. For more years than the CD has existed in its present form, the United States has been engaged in negotiations on controlling, reducing, and eliminating nuclear weapons. To enhance our understanding of this point, I have made available to the members of the Conference a 95-page booklet, complete with a glossary of technical terms, that describes the United States' commitment to arms control and disarmament and the many achievements in this area. The photograph on the cover depicts United States Air Force B-52 heavy bombers cut into pieces and displayed openly in the State of Arizona. The United States record on nuclear disarmament, as eloquently displayed in this one picture, is worth a thousand words.

Throughout 1997, all substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament was stymied and held hostage to nuclear disarmament linkage. Our continued inability to function effectively as a multilateral forum brings to mind the cri de coeur of the late baseball manager Casey Stengel, who, on observing the dismal performance of his 1960s-era New York Mets baseball team, was heard to exclaim "Don't nobody know how to play this game?". I, too, must ask if we are capable of working as a team to accomplish realistic goals.

(Mr. Grey, United States)

It is still early in the 1998 session, but the CD's current performance does not compare favourably with its past successes. The CD can still have a productive year if we want it badly enough. I did not come here simply to warm a seat and I know that I am not alone in that sentiment.

The key to moving forward is consensus on the basis of widely consulted proposals. That is the way the CD has worked in the past, and it continues to be the best way forward. For its part, the United States is prepared to work with every member of this body in an effort to find a way forward that we all can live with. It strains credulity to suggest that the United State does not foresee a role for the CD on the question of nuclear disarmament. The completion of the CTBT, and our continuing efforts to begin FMCT negotiations in this Conference, bear unequivocal testimony to the CD's vital role. We are always prepared to listen, to participate, to contribute, and to discuss issues of concern to all.

I appeal to all CD members, new and old, to cross group boundaries and to join in immediate negotiations to ban the export of anti-personnel landmines and to end the production of fissile material. If we continue to stall on these important global security issues, the CD may lose the confidence of the international community.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the United States, Mr. Grey, for his statement. Distinguished delegates, this concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I recognize the Ambassador of Pakistan.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): It was not the intention of my delegation to ask for the floor today, since it was our view that the CD was making reasonably good progress, having adopted its agenda, even in the absence of a formal statement from the delegation of Pakistan.

Unfortunately, the developments of the past few days indicate that our Conference may yet again revert to the situation that we faced last year and be unable to undertake substantive work on any of the agenda items that have been put forward. My delegation shares the sentiment, although perhaps not the substance, of the statement which has just been made by the distinguished Ambassador of the United States. And we, too, would wish to see whether our Conference could not, even in these circumstances that prevail, find a way to reach consensus on some issues so that we can commence work while we continue to debate the issues on which consensus cannot be reached at the present time. We have heard today about tactics and strategy, and one thing that perhaps we ought to guard against is to follow the axiom which we hear in the negotiations on APL, which was "Ban yours, not mine", and this is a tactic which obviously will not allow the emergence of consensus on all the items.

My delegation feels that it is fairly obvious that there are some issues on which consensus can be reached, at least on a limited basis, and we should capture that consensus as soon as possible. Among these, we believe, consensus can be reached on the reappointment of the four Special Coordinators which the CD had agreed to establish last year. My delegation's view is that

(Mr. Akram, Pakistan)

even those countries which are not in favour of negotiations on anti-personnel landmines in the CD would have the opportunity to express their views to the Special Coordinator in the course of his work and thereafter, to see whether consensus can be reached on a possible mandate for negotiations.

Secondly, as you have yourself noted, Mr. President, and others have noted, we are close to agreement on the appointment of a special coordinator on outer space. My delegation is willing to be flexible on the mandate and the language of the mandate which is to be given to the special coordinator on outer space. I believe we can reach that decision very soon.

Thirdly, we thought we had a consensus on the establishment of an ad hoc committee on negative security assurances. However, at the last set of informal consultations, we were disabused by the position of one member State. We therefore feel that consultations ought to continue on the issue of the creation of an ad hoc committee on NSA in order to overcame the new difficulties that have arisen.

At the same time, I think it needs no elaboration to say that my delegation attaches the highest importance to the item on nuclear disarmament. The Coordinator of the Group of 21 has stated that the Group awaits a response to the various proposals that have been made on nuclear disarmament, especially by the Group of 21 and members of the Group of 21. But we understand that a consensus on the modalities for negotiations or deliberations on this item may be elusive at the present moment. We would therefore urge you, Mr. President, and your successor to continue the process of informal consultations and to see whether agreement could be reached on some version of the proposals which are on the table at the present moment, including the proposals of the Group of 21. This is a process which could take a few weeks, but we should address this proposal with the patience that is required due to the importance of the item. But we must not allow our frustration with the inability to reach agreement on this item to prevent us from achieving consensus on the other issues where consensus appears, at least to my delegation, to be possible at the present moment. That would be the course we would urge, and we would then be able to say to our colleague from the United States that we do not know to play this game.

Mr. SELEBI (South Africa): I addressed this Conference on 20 January at its opening plenary meeting for the 1998 session. At that time South Africa made a proposal to the Conference on Disarmament for a decision on the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. In my statement I also addressed the issue of negative security assurances clarifying my Government's views on, and approach to, this issue. In my statement today, I again wish to take up the proposal which we have made on nuclear disarmament, address the issue of negative security assurances (NSAs) in the light of recent developments in the informal consultations held under your auspices, Mr. President, and I wish to raise the anti-personnel mines (APM) issue.

On negative security assurances, I expressed some of my delegation's concerns when addressing the Conference on 20 January. In short: the CD has, in the past, shown a singular lack of any progress when dealing with this

(Mr. Selebi, South Africa)

issue; we question whether negative security assurances are a genuine disarmament measure belonging in this body and whether they should not, in fact, be viewed as a confirmation of the nuclear-weapon status of those States which possess these weapons; and we question whether the CD is in fact the correct forum to deal with this issue.

Notwithstanding our understanding that a consensus does not now exist on the proposal to establish an ad hoc committee on NSAs, it is in the context of our previous statements, and in view of the developments in the CD on this issue, as well as after consultation with Pretoria, that I wish to raise certain questions which will assist us in formulating our reaction to the developments here.

The following questions which I pose are asked in reference to the CD mandate which has been the basis of the work on the NSA issue in the Conference: "the Conference on Disarmament decides to re-establish, for the duration of its 1992 session, an ad hoc committee to continue to negotiate with a view to reaching agreement on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons". What is the purpose of establishing an ad hoc committee on negative security assurances? Is it the intention of all of the States which have agreed to its establishment (including those nuclear-weapon States who have so clearly demonstrated their desire for an ad hoc committee) that the result should be a negotiated, internationally legally binding instrument on NSAs? Should the agreement, both stated and unstated, which has been demonstrated by the nuclear-weapon States for the establishment of an ad hoc committee, be interpreted as an indication that they have revised their previous positions on the granting of NSAs. In other words, by indicating their agreement to the establishment of an NSA ad hoc committee, do the supporting CD members undertake that we will be doing serious and focused work on the negotiation of NSAs, or is the intention that this body will only serve to repeat the Conference's previous experience?

Now turning to the anti-personnel mines issue, I also wish to pose a series of questions which will help us clarify our position. These are questions which I have posed previously but which (with the exception of some remarks by the distinguished Ambassador of France) have remained unanswered.

As was said by the distinguished Ambassador of China in the informal consultations on Tuesday, although in a different context, my delegation would like to know what the ultimate intention is of the proposals that have been made. I know that some of the delegations here may not be in a position to answer these questions, but I believe that those who have been its strongest advocates should be in a position to provide us with their vision. In addition to the remarks made by Poland today, we would seek to know: what is the intended scope of any agreement on anti-personnel mines negotiated in the CD? To which anti-personnel mines is it intended that such an agreement would apply? Would it be to the APM as defined in the Ottawa treaty or to that in the CCW? Given the fact that the APM Protocol to the CCW is expected to enter into force this year, once a further five instruments of ratification have been deposited (including, it is our hope, that of South Africa), does the CCW

(Mr. Selebi, South Africa)

forum not provide us with a better alternative? Is there a need for a third international instrument, when the CCW's APM Protocol could, with little amendment, meet the apparent objectives of those advocates of the APM issue in the CD? It is argued that the CD is the most appropriate venue for further work on the APM issue because the primary producers and users of APM, who have been unable to sign the Ottawa treaty, are represented here. But is this also not the case in the CCW where, as I have demonstrated, it could be hoped that negotiations on the issue would be far simpler? Are there any assurances that, as has been stated by the proponents of APM in the CD, all of the States which have been unable to support the Ottawa treaty will be netted through the process here? Or is it the case that, as with other treaties negotiated in the CD, all of its members will not agree to be bound by the fruits of their negotiations?

On the proposal for a decision for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, the text of which has been circulated by the secretariat as document CD/1483 dated 20 January 1998, I would firstly like to extend my Government's appreciation to those delegations who have welcomed, and indicated their support for, the proposal.

We are aware that the motivation of South Africa in making the nuclear disarmament proposal has been questioned. South Africa's motivation on this issue is clear and is demonstrated by the fact that we are the only country which has unilaterally destroyed its own arsenal of nuclear weapons. Rather than seeking to sow confusion by chasing motivational ghosts, members of the Conference on Disarmament should recognize that the Conference is at a crossroads of relevance where we should seek to tackle the real issues which face us and address these in a realistic and achievable manner.

The question which, however, faces this Conference now is how to go forward on the nuclear disarmament issue. In my statement three weeks ago on 20 January, I stated that it was South Africa's intention to push forward with this decision in a plenary meeting of the CD in the near future; and the near future is soon.

Of late, my delegation has been approached on the timing of bringing this proposal to the plenary for decision by the members of the Conference on Disarmament. Some have wondered whether more time is necessary and whether the opportunity should be given to allow CD members to engage the issue, possibly under your auspices, Mr. President. We have already had three weeks. The informal consultations which you did convene on the nuclear disarmament issue did not appear to us to be close to delivering any conclusive results. We must therefore at this juncture ask if there is anything to gain by allowing further time. Is there a possibility that we will be able to resolve the nuclear disarmament issue in a way which satisfies all the members of the CD? Will the answer be any different from now? If not, is it not better to confront these problems head on, early in the Conference's session, so that we can honestly and openly debate them in the appropriate forums?

I would, however, continue to emphasize that we should not allow this issue, which we are all fully aware lies at the heart of the fundamental

(Mr. Selebi, South Africa)

problems facing the Conference today, to be submerged in the morass of CD procedural tactics or inaction. The CD will not be able to fulfil the international community's expectations - especially as we approach the start of the next millennium, when we all hope for a more secure future than we and our predecessors have faced - by avoiding this issue.

Mr. President, I have raised all of the above-mentioned issues, and I am aware that many of the points I have made are formulated as questions. However, this is done in an endeavour to constructively assist you and my own Government in finding solutions to the debates which we have had here in recent weeks.

Mrs. BOURGOIS (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, thank you for calling upon me on this penultimate day of your presidency. I hope that this statement, which was not scheduled, will not make your last day more complicated but rather will allow you to close on a note of humour. You know me well and you knew I could not resist the temptation to answer my friend the Ambassador of South Africa, the representative of a country for which France and myself have the utmost respect. I feel the need not to reply to him in full, because the answer would call for detail and some length, but I nevertheless feel the need to answer him, because I think he has put sincere, honest questions to us which we should address to ourselves. So, on a few points, and in a partial and incomplete form, I should like to offer France's replies to some of these questions, which I will take up in the order in which he himself raised them.

Concerning the re-establishment of an ad hoc committee on security assurances, I understand that past experience is not encouraging. I understand his argument less well when he explains on the one hand that the negotiation of a multilateral and legally binding instrument in the Conference on Disarmament would simply reinforce the prerogatives of the nuclear States, whereas on the other hand he proposes the negotiation of such a multilateral and legally binding instrument under the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Whether in Geneva or New York, either this Treaty is deemed useful for the security of the international community, or it is considered pointless because it strengthens the so-called prerogatives of the nuclear States. But there cannot be two different answers to that question according to the body involved. It is either yes or no, and if it is no in Geneva, then it is no in New York, and if it is yes in Geneva it is yes in New York. So here there is a point which I don't understand.

Why re-establish an ad hoc committee which my country - quite without enthusiasm, I hasten to add - is ready to accept now? Ambassador Selebi raises a series of very pertinent questions, but he must see that we cannot answer these questions as long as we have not begun to talk, we cannot run down our negotiating positions by saying in advance what we are going to do, otherwise there would no longer be any need for negotiations. So here too - you may put it down to a perversion of Cartesian logic, but I think that if it is justified to raise questions, we are also justified in not supplying an immediate and categorical answer. However, unlike him, I think nonetheless that there would be merit in having talks on this subject in such a committee

(Mrs. Bourgois, France)

for at least two reasons. The first is that since the period when the Conference started talks in this area, the times have greatly changed. The commitments entered into in the framework of positive or negative security assurances have proliferated, becoming both numerous and not always harmonized. We are truly entering a new era of international relations from that standpoint, and in France we feel that we have to take a look at the past in order to see things clearly and see how, in the future, we should embark on reflection based on what has already been achieved and what might still be necessary. Of course this involves reflection in the first place, but reflection, as the Ambassador of Algeria said earlier in his outstanding statement, is an integral part of negotiation.

I will also give him another answer: the Conference on Disarmament has the advantage, although it is not universal, that it represents all the major schools of thought in the international community and includes States which, for reasons of their own, have not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty - hence the value, for a country such as my own which believes in dialogue, of not excluding them a priori from a new exercise of reflection on the topic of security assurances. Ambassador Selebi was the architect of negotiations in Oslo on this issue that gave rise to the Ottawa Convention. We were on the same side at all times in that area, but I differ from the conclusions that he reaches. Why not try to take a small step forward here? Why deny to States - and some of them have spoken today - which were not able or did not wish to sign in Ottawa and are not going to do so in the near future, why refuse to reach out to those States in a spirit of dialogue and build on the greater awareness they have acquired of the humanitarian problems caused by mines, thanks to that very Ottawa Process? Who would be the losers? Not the Ottawa signatories, nor the peoples threatened by mines, nor these States themselves.

Now, of course, there is the idea of making use of the previous framework, even though the Ottawa Process had ruled it out - that of the 1980 Convention and its Amended Protocol II. We could of course consider this solution. For my part - and this is what surprises me, that starting from the same premises, Ambassador Selebi and I should arrive at contrary conclusions - I think the framework of the Conference on Disarmament is much to be preferred. Firstly because of the continued urgency in this field, which argues in favour of dealing with this subject here and now, without waiting for a rather long legal and political process to end before it can be taken up again in the bodies relating to the 1980 Convention. Secondly, if the Ottawa Process came into being it was because the negotiations on Protocol II had disappointed many States, including my own, and the cause of this disappointment lay, among other things, in definitions that some had found rather too subtle. If we find ourselves negotiating again within the 1980 Convention framework, the point of departure will be those definitions, whereas it would be far better - and this we could do here - to start from the simpler definitions appearing in the Ottawa Convention, which would really make it possible to achieve progress on anti-personnel mines without exception - when I say without exception, this would of course cover only transfers or exports - but anti-personnel mines of whatever type, however technologically sophisticated or unsophisticated.

(Mrs. Bourgois, France)

These are the two reasons for which I think he should give his consent to the appointment of a special coordinator, because that corresponds fundamentally to the position of his country and because after all whatever doubts he may have about the merits of the CD in this sphere, he can express them to the special coordinator. Thus this is not a huge commitment, it is simply a commitment to dialogue.

You will not be surprised if I do not prolong this meeting for too long, because I would certainly be strongly criticized by Ambassador Lars Norberg, notwithstanding his notable patience and his well-known sense of diplomacy, by taking up nuclear matters; and in any case, you are familiar with France's position. But it is true that this is a complex matter and that, as the Ambassador of Pakistan said, we will need to try and rub our ideas on these issues against each other for many meetings yet. Well, yes, I think that South Africa has made a quite remarkable proposal, which stands as a sort of bridge between rather conflicting approaches, and I congratulate South Africa on this proposal. Nevertheless, my country is not going to accept this proposal, at least not now. Why? Because it is premature. It is premature because first of all we must endeavour to negotiate the convention to ban fissile material. That is the real work to be done for the moment, that was the first step that was identified, and that is what we have to deal with first. Of course we will be told: if this body to which such emotional, not to say religious significance is attached - the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament - were to be established today, could we not at the same time start the negotiations on cut-off? Well, no, as you are well aware. That would simply isolate certain States, and France does not like isolating States, even in its own interest. So, I think that in fact we need time, we need a little patience and I think we also have to express gratitude to Ambassador Selebi for the patience he has shown today in making this statement and putting before us these honest questions to which I have tried to provide a preliminary answer, honestly and in good faith.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Today has been a particularly interesting meeting. We have heard new proposals that we shall study closely and we have heard repeated appeals, which gain weight as time goes by, that we should not repeat last year's deplorable performance but should break the stalemate. Last week you and I had a meeting, Mr. President, which I left feeling very optimistic about the possibility of arriving at a programme of work. I realize that I made a mistake frequently committed by economists. Economists are sure that optimists are merely pessimists who are ill-informed, and I think I was indeed ill-informed.

There are still differences that separate us on all the agenda items. Of course I share many of the points of view put forward today, but there is one of particular concern to me. I am concerned that systematically, and in every meeting we hold, the universal scope of the Ottawa Convention is called into question. This is a Convention that my country and myself regard as important and consider very useful. Today comments have been made about another convention to which my country attaches importance, that is the 1980 Convention on Conventional Weapons, and that also gives me cause for concern. There seem to be views on this matter that my country does not

(Mr. de Icaza, Mexico)

share. When we negotiated that convention in the second half of the 1970s, one of the most difficult problems we had was to include a mechanism for follow-up action. We managed it. It is hard to read, it is hard to understand and hard to explain perhaps, but it does have a follow-up mechanism for a convention which, in the final analysis, was legally innovative and provides an umbrella to which can be added a variety of protocols on a variety of weapons or a variety of topics. This follow-up mechanism provided for a conference that would be held a certain number of years after entry into force, one that was held as a result of a French initiative, and it did take place. That review conference adopted a revised and amended protocol to Protocol II, and adopted Protocol IV, and in accordance with the review mechanism, it was decided that there would be other subsequent conferences, and the next is scheduled for the year 2000.

It is a serious error to believe that only by amending the amended Protocol II, or only by amending the Protocol on mines, it would be possible to place a ban on the transfer of mines within 18 months, at the conference in the year 2000. To do that, all that would be required is to have a Protocol V. It would have nothing to do either with the original Protocol II or with the amended Protocol II that we drew up at the last conference. If there is general agreement concerning a total ban on the transfer of anti-personnel mines, in the widest possible sense of the term, let those of us that are parties to the 1980 Convention step outside and we can draft it very easily in a day, and we can adopt it at the review conference that is scheduled in the year 2000. It would take us a lot less time than going through the Conference on Disarmament. The problem is this rather confused idea of what can be done in other bodies, and of priorities. I agree, there is a pressing need for the Ottawa Convention to enter into force, there is a pressing need for it to become universal, as a result of accession by all States, and perhaps a few practical steps could be taken in this Conference so as to achieve those two objectives, and perhaps it might be appropriate to establish or appoint a special coordinator for the purpose. I would have no difficulty. But there is an argument that escapes me, and it is the argument that we have to have a new treaty because there is one in existence that is not going to be ratified in the foreseeable future by one or two States. If this argument were to prove acceptable, the first thing we would have to do is restart negotiations on the CTBT and the NPT. No, treaties are supposed to be universal, a status they attain step by step, and universality would not be served by efforts to re-negotiate them.

Mr. SELEBI (South Africa): All I want to do is thank the distinguished Ambassador of France for attempting to answer the questions that I had posed. I must say though, with all humility, that I am not wiser after that intervention. A premature child is a child. It is not a gorilla. It is a child. I do hope that maybe people have not had time to formulate answers to these questions. I have the patience to wait for much clearer answers that can help me to be wiser than before I posed the question.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of South Africa, Ambassador Selebi. If there are no more requests for the floor, as my term of office is coming to an end, I should like to make some concluding remarks.

(The President)

It was an encouraging start for this year's session when the Conference adopted its agenda for 1998 at its first plenary meeting on 20 January.

Since then we have completed a first round of informal open-ended consultations on a number of issues of particular interest.

Agenda item 1, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament", is in my opinion a pivotal issue. In our consultations two subjects have dominated the discussions under this item: nuclear disarmament and a fissile material cut-off treaty. These discussions have not so far yielded conclusive results. My conclusion, after this first round of consultations, is therefore that further consultations are needed in order to bring about a convergence of views on the issues to be addressed under this item and the organizational framework in which they might be considered.

On some other items on our agenda our consultations have produced considerable convergence of views.

On agenda item 3, "Prevention of an arms race in outer space", there seems to be agreement in principle to appoint a special coordinator. However, we have not yet been able to finalize the specific mandate for such a special coordinator.

On agenda item 4, "Negative security assurances", there is a large measure of agreement to re-establish the ad hoc committee on that item.

With respect to agenda item 6, "Comprehensive programme of disarmament", there is a strong trend in favour of appointing a special coordinator on the question of anti-personnel landmines. It seems to me that we are pretty close to an agreement on this matter.

And finally, on item 7, "Transparency in armaments", there was also a wide measure of support to appoint a special coordinator to conduct consultations on the most appropriate way to deal with this question.

On all these items - that is, 3, 4, 6 and 7 - further consultations are also needed in order to establish a basis for formal decisions.

Although it is obvious that much work remains to be done, it has been encouraging for me to see the flexibility and cooperation shown by delegations so far. In my opinion, there is a new and positive atmosphere in the Conference this year, which is best demonstrated by the fact that the Conference has already been able to cover important ground and prepare for decisions on substantive work.

I should therefore like to express to all delegations my sincere gratitude for the cooperation and support you have extended to me throughout my presidency.

In particular, I should like to thank the Group Coordinators, Ambassadors Selebi and Palihakkara of the Group of 21, Ambassador Maimeskul of

(The President)

the Eastern European Group, Ambassador Hofer of the Western Group and Ambassador Li Changhe of China, as well as Mr. Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Mr. Bensmail, Deputy Secretary-General of the CD, and the entire secretariat.

It only remains for me to wish my successor in this post, Ambassador Erwin Hofer of Switzerland, every success during his term of office.

This concludes our business for today, and the next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 19 February 1998, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.